Diminishing Returns: AI's Looming Threat to Content Creation, and AI Itself

Today, amidst the ever-evolving landscape of technology, generative AI is at the forefront of public attention. Generative AI systems are designed to generate content and interact with existing content, unlike other AI systems that are used for different tasks like making decisions, and classifying data. The content could be in the form of images, text, code, audio and even video [1].

Given the ability of popular AI systems to work with the 'text' form of content – one that we use on a day-to-day basis, Generative AI systems have also emerged as productivity-enhancing tools. People have already started to use AI to research, produce content and summarize or understand existing content without consuming it from the source. Earlier this year, Microsoft announced the integration of Chat GPT with their search engine [2], to supply answers, cutting the need to visit websites in many cases. The trend of consuming content through AI models raises two major challenges:

First, when more users would effortlessly obtain accurate, concise and tailored responses from AI models, the need to visit original sources for information will diminish. As a result, current information sources (websites) would gradually witness a decline in traffic. This problem is compounded by the fact that over 50% of all websites use advertisements as a source of revenue [3], and a decline in the number of users will reduce the attractiveness of these platforms to advertisers, ultimately impacting their bottom line.

Second, in a landscape where the existing incentives for traditional text-based content creation would likely fade, who would provide the massive amounts of data needed to train and improve future AI systems? Since training AI systems on AI-generated data results in irreversible defects [4], and we want our models to remain contemporary, we need human-generated data for our future models. It is possible that some firms may create content for product education, or some individuals may continue to share information as a personal interest, but the broader content creation ecosystem is destined to face major challenges.

I expect that we will soon be looking at a pivotal moment, where bloggers, journalistic outlets, and website owners will have to confront the growing uncertainties about their livelihoods in an AI-dominated era. Not to mention, we would also be looking at a scarcity of contemporary human-generated text-based data to train future models on.

A potential solution to these challenges might involve new incentives for content creators, where AI models compensate individuals for the use of their data. However, such mechanisms would likely face obstacles from technology companies, since they are already heavily disputing lawsuits coming their way over usage of copyrighted information [5,6].

Given the massive forces at play, the rapid rate of technological development and the associated uncertainty, I believe that governments need to step in to address this issue. Clear rules must be set for AI usage. Laws related to copyrighting and content usage must be reworked to address the presence of AI. They must maintain fair usage while ensuring that content creators have control of their data, can get credit, and can monetize it.

In conclusion, we will soon be at a point, where the fate of content creators and the quality of AI models would be at stake. Unless governments awaken to these challenges promptly, we risk witnessing a rapid evolution of technology that leaves the future clouded in uncertainty.

References:

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